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WELL DEVELOPMENTS

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No. 26 Board of Water Well Contractors October 2001

PROTECT YOURSELF! BE KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT WHERE YOU ARE DRILLING

We are reprinting a letter to the board from Peter Neilsen R.S., Missoula County Health Department, because it applies to current state situations.

More and more frequently, we are seeing situations in which a well drilled in the wrong location creates major problems for landowners or their neighbors. Landowners who are not familiar with their new parcels of land can inadvertently ask well drillers to place a well in the wrong location.

Please be aware that new parcels of land created by Certificate of Survey or Subdivision of Land have been reviewed for the removal of sanitary restrictions and approved for drainfields and their replacement areas in specific locations. The inadvertent drilling of a well within 100 feet of a drainfield or replacement area will cause the parcel to have to be resubmitted to the state Department of Environmental Quality for additional review and new approval (a costly process in both time and money). On small lots with limited space, a well drilled in the wrong place can prevent use of the land for a homesite. Worse yet, it may prevent the owner of a neighboring parcel from being able to get a septic system permit and approval for his or her adjacent piece of land.

Protect yourself! Be knowledgeable about the land upon which you have been asked to drill a well. Ask to see the plat map of the land, or inquire whether the homeowner is aware of the approved well site. If the homeowner or developer looks at you as if you are speaking a foreign language, you should see red flags all over! To be sure that you won't be creating a problem for the homeowner, ask to see one or more of the following.

1. The septic permit for the parcel. (If they don't have one, encourage them to do this first.) Then you will know for certain where the drainfield and replacement area are located.

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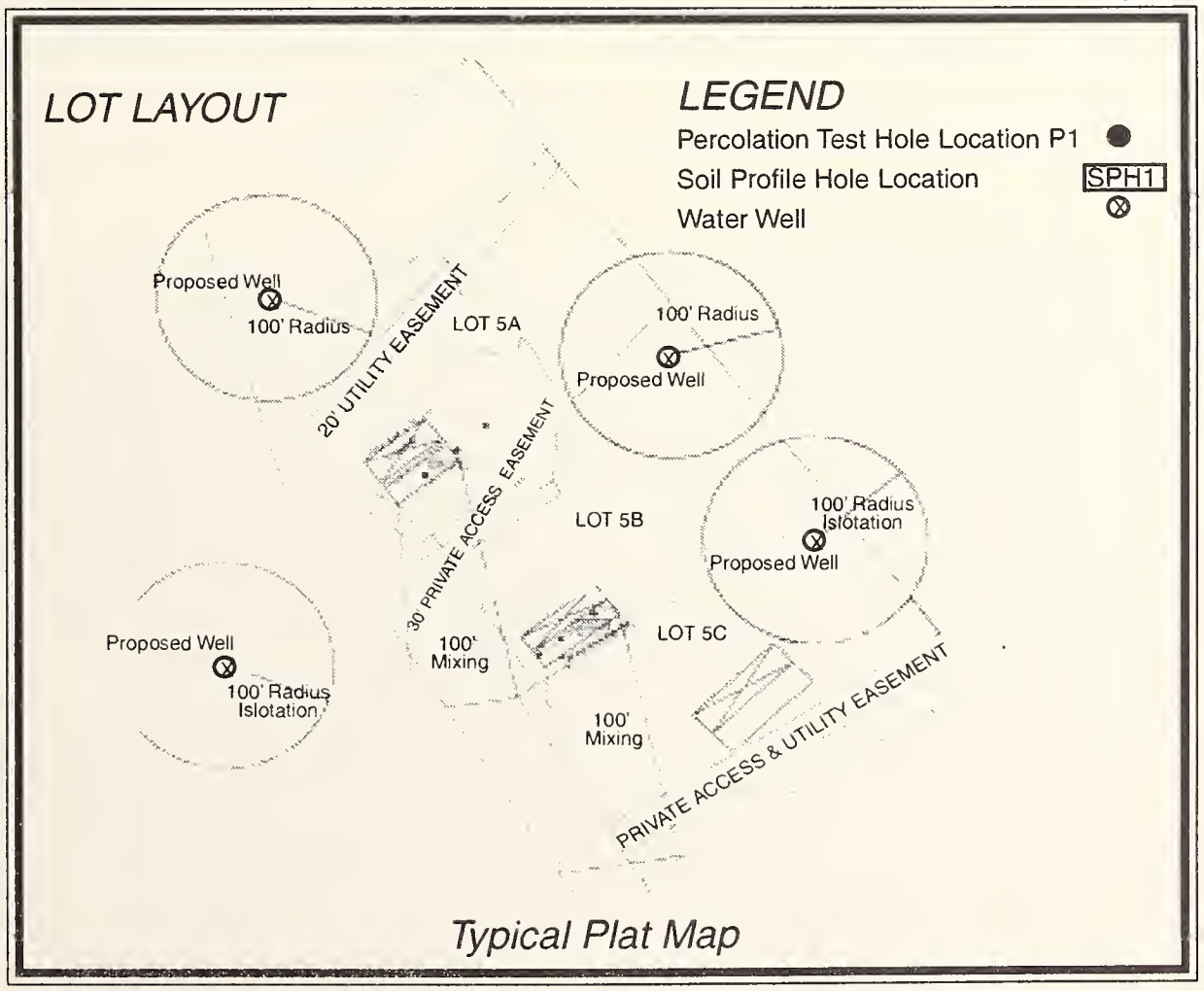

Typical Plat Map

DRY HOLES

The average family uses 5 to 7 gallons per minute (gpm) of water. Add a garden and a lawn, and the use increases to about 8 to 10 gpm. A comfortable water yield, if it is sustainable, is 12 gpm. Lending institutions may require 4 to 5 gpm for the property to qualify for mortgages. A well yielding 1½ to 2 gpm can be developed for minimal use by building a cistern for storage. Deeper wells can also store water for use during time of higher demand.

The BWWC has found that complaints often center around a promise by the driller that there will be enough water, but it turns out that the water is not sufficient. Montana regulations require, that after you surge and clean the well, you bail or pump for a minimum of one hour. This only indicates that the well is likely to be sustainable. By pump testing the well until drawdown can be measured, the prudent well owner will know better how the well will sustain pumping. Many varieties, from geological conditions to cyclic precipitation changes, can affect recharge, so there is no set rule to go by.

The BWWC recommends that you follow the procedures in the rules and inform the well owner that he or she would be wise to do more pump testing. Well logs must be filed for dry wells.♦

CONTINUING EDUCATION SCHEDULE

The Montana Environmental Training Center (METC) has prepared its training calendar for 2001, and BWWC has recommended several courses that qualify as approved training for water well licensees. They are as follows:

Small Water and Wastewater System Operation
October 16-17, 2001 — Missoula

Understanding Groundwater and Contamination
November 6, 2001 — Lewistown

Communication Skills
November 11, 2001 — Great Falls

Financial Planning
December 5, 2001 — Great Falls

NGWA Annual Convention
December 7-9, 2001 — Nashville, Tennessee

The Board of Water Well Contractors and METC have discussed training sessions that may be more specific to water well and monitoring well construction. If you have suggestions for training, please contact Bob Rudio at 444-6643 or Jan Boyle at 771-4433

Most training schools by suppliers and manufacturers begin in the spring of the year. You should contact your suppliers for upcoming schedules.♦

NEW LICENSEE

Water Well Contractors

Mark Christian	Lincoln, Mont.
Mike Lien	Polson, Mont.
Mark Miller	Helena, Mont.
Ross Purviance	Libby, Mont.
Kevin Schomer	Polson, Mont.

Water Well Drillers

Randy Bryant	Bozeman, Mont.
Chris Hahn	Laurel, Mont.
Matt McCartney	Choteau, Mont.
Jeff Torgrimson	Bozeman, Mont.
Martin Wilson	Ramsay, Mont.

Monitoring Well Constructors

Bob Frantz	Helena, Mont.
Tom Grimm	Billings, Mont.
Ed Handl	Butte, Mont.
Larry Johnson	Missoula, Mont.

Fifteen licensees did not renew their licenses during the last license year. There are currently 272 licensed persons in Montana.♦

WELL LOCATION IN SUBDIVISIONS

The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has asked the Board of Water Well Contractors (BWWC) to make certain subdivision information is available to all licensed persons engaged in water well construction.

The primary reason for requiring a specific location for wells is to ensure the required setbacks to potential sources of contamination (drainfields, for example) are maintained. In addition, practically every new septic system/drainfield that has been submitted for subdivision review since April 29, 1993, has a "mixing zone" into which a new well cannot be drilled per ARM 17.30.508 (the size and location of the mixing zone depends on the lot size, septic system type, and the direction of groundwater flow). Therefore, if a well is drilled in an unapproved location, the 100-foot setback to the drainfield might be maintained, but the well may be located in the owner's (or a neighbor's) mixing zone. Typically, when this happens, nobody realizes the problem and the well may be at risk to sewage contamination. Alternately, the land owner (or their neighbor) may have to change the location of a drainfield, which may or may not be a simple process.

While, it is ultimately the responsibility of the land owner to make sure the well is located in the correct location, many land owners are simply not aware that there is a legal requirement to drill the well in the approved location or have the location legally changed. This is where licensed well contractors can help get this information directly to the people who need it. DEQ is requesting that the BWWC inform licensed well contractors of this potential problem. In addition, the board should also request that licensed contractors inform each of their customers of the legal requirements regarding the location of the well. To reiterate, the department is not proposing that it's the contractors responsibility to drill the well in the approved location (if the setbacks in ARM 36.21.638 are maintained), rather we request that the driller inform the owner of the responsibilities.♦

BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU SAY

Licensed drillers often forget that they work for a <u>bonded</u> water well contractor. At times they tend to be too confident in what they say to a well owner. This leads to misunderstandings regarding both financial agreements and well construction. The Board of Water Well Contractors (BWWC) receives many complaints because "the guy on the rig said that we would get good water at so many feet." Contractors need to make sure their drillers do not offer unsubstantiated opinions.

DISINFECTION OF PUBLIC WELLS AND WATER SYSTEMS

By Eric Regensburger, DEQ

Water well contractors are often asked to disinfect public water wells and/or the associated distribution systems.

When you are involved in this type of work, it is important to know that there are procedures and materials that are specifically approved for public water systems. These procedures include specific American Water Works Association (AWWA) requirements regarding the proper chlorine concentration, methods for circulating the chlorine solution, and how long to maintain the chlorine in the system. There are also Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) requirements regarding the type of chlorine that is allowed and the maximum chlorine residual that may be delivered to customers.

For example, are you aware that most brands of household bleach are not approved for use in active public water systems? Chlorine chemicals may not be used in public water supplies unless they have the National Sanitation Foundation (NSF) seal of approval for use in drinking water. Information on disinfection procedures is available through the Department of Environmental Quality's Public Water Supply Section (444-4400). Information on AWWA standards is also available on the AWWA website at **www.awwa.org.**♦

HISTORICAL BOARD MEETINGS

The twenty-third meeting of the Water Well Contractors Examining Board was held on December 12, 1967, in Room 124 of the State Capitol Building, Helena, Montana. William Osborne was appointed by the governor to replace Mr. Van Dyken. Mr. Darlinton replaced Mr. McDermott. Mr. Hardy, state license inspector, reported that he had traveled 8,425 miles, contacted 56 drillers, and found 14 rigs that were not properly identified by sign. Mr. Darlinton made a motion that the board set up a system of licensing on the state data processing system. The motion was seconded by William Osborne and passed by voice vote. C. W. Brinck was unanimously elected chairman of the board, and Mr. Osborne was elected vice chairman. The board received complaints against Mr. C. W. Parrent, doing business as Vista Drilling Company. A letter was being prepared by Mr. Sternhagen of the Attorney General's Office to be sent to Mr. Parrent.♦

PROTECT YOURSELF!

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2. The plat map for the parcel. (The plat map will show the approved sites for the well, drainfield, and replacement areas.)

3. Come to the Environmental Health Division of the Missoula County-County Health Department to look at the plat of the parcel in question. The sanitarian on duty can help you determine where the approved well site is located on the parcel. Or, call (406) 523-4755 or Fax (406) 523-4781 your request to have a plat map faxed to you.♦

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